

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Amended) An isolated antibody comprising at least the V_H complementarity determining region (CDR) 3 (CDR3) having amino acids 98-106 of SEQ ID NO:4, which antibody specifically recognizes a conformation-dependent epitope of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 and precipitates covalently or non-covalently associated E2/E1 complexes.

2. (Currently Amended) The antibody of claim 1, wherein said isolated antibody is a monoclonal antibody, one of a polyclonal antiserum, chimeric antibody, humanized antibody, synthetic antibody[,] or an antibody fragment, or a chemically modified derivative thereof.

3-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Maintained) A neutralization assay for inhibiting the binding of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 to target cells using the antibody of claim 1 or 2 comprising contacting said virus with said antibody and determining whether binding of HCV to target cells is inhibited.

18-24. (Cancelled)

25. (Maintained) The isolated antibody of claim 1 further comprising the V_H CDR1 having amino acids 31-35 of SEQ ID NO:4, and the V_H CDR2 having amino acids 50-65 of SEQ ID NO:4, and the V_L CDR1 having amino acids 23-33 of SEQ ID NO:2, the V_L CDR2 having amino acids 49-55 of SEQ ID NO:2 and the V_L CDR3 having amino acids 88-98 of SEQ ID NO:2.

26. (Maintained) The isolated antibody of claim 1 comprising the V_H amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:4.

27. (Maintained) The isolated antibody of claim 1 comprising the V_H amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:4 and the V_L amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2.

28. (Maintained) The isolated antibody of claim 27 which is a human monoclonal antibody.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Currently Amended) A neutralization assay for inhibiting the binding of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 to target cells using the antibody of [any one of the claims] claim 27 [to 29] or 28 comprising contacting said virus with said antibody and determining whether the binding of HCV to target cells is inhibited.